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ABSTRACT

The paper reports results of a study of the distribution of productivity among sociologists who publish. Previous research had indicated that a large percentage of sociologists do not publish very often. In this study, a random sample of 300 Ph.D. members of the American Sociological Association were queried about their publishing activities. The questionnaire limited the responses to publications, papers, and other means by which findings of the sociologists' dissertations had been disseminated. Tables of response data show that 54% of all the articles published were written by only 25% of the people in the survey. Thus, it is evident that a majority of the articles are written by a minority of the sociologists. Another analysis was performed to see whether the large number of recent Ph.D. recipients was inflating the percentage of those with few publications. The analysis excluded sociologists who had received their degrees after 1969. Again, a high percentage of articles was attributed to a small percentage of individuals. The conclusion is that there is a highly uneven distribution of productivity among Ph.D. sociologists in the United States. (Author/AV)

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DISTRIBUTION OF PRODUCTIVITY AMONG SOCIOLOGISTS

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In an early study of research authorship, Smith[1] found that about 75 percent of the authors in the fields of arithmetic, English, reading and spelling had published only one study. Similarly, Cole & Cole[2] reported that a large percentage of the physicists they studied were low in scientific productivity. Data on the productivity of social scientists were published by Lazarsfeld & Thielens[3] and subsequently Lewis cited these figures in supporting his conclusion that the "publication record of most academicians is pretty skimpy."[4]

The significance of such findings was suggested by Gardner's observations that only rarely can individuals who are sporadically engaged in research be adequately competent to attack the problems they investigate. He asserted that "Nothing can replace steady and continuing experience in a field of research as a qualification for doing fundamental and significant research in that field."[5]

More recently, Babchuk & Bates,[6] Wanderer,[7] Glenn & Villemez,[8] Lightfield,[9] Larson et al.,[10] and Yoels[11] have presented data suggesting the generally low productivity of sociologists.

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The purpose of the present study was to examine the distribution of productivity among those sociologists who do publish. Data were collected by means of a questionnaire sent to a random sample of 300 cases drawn from the universe of all members of the American Sociological Association residing in

the United States who hold the Ph.D. By means of an open-ended format, members were asked to list publications, papers presented, and "any other means" by which findings of their dissertations had been disseminated. It should be noted that the questionnaire was originally designed to gather data relevant to a different research question[12] and is limited to publications resulting from doctoral research. The original mailing in February, 1974, together with a follow-up mailing in March, yielded a response rate of 72% (N = 216).

Table I (page 4) reveals the extent to which it is a minority of sociologists who publish a majority of articles. For example, those sociologists who wrote three or more articles (25% of the producers) published 54% of the total number. Conversely, over half of the producers published only one article.

The pattern of productive concentration exhibited in Table I is also found in the second table (page 5). Thus, the 34% of the productive sample publishing three or more publictions (articles, books, monographs, chapters, research bulletins, etc.) produced 62% of all publications. On the other hand, nearly half produced only one publication.

It could reasonably be argued that those sociologists who have recently received the Ph.D. have not been "at risk" as long as others and that this factor would inflate the percentage of those with few publications. Because Lightfield's[13] data indicate that sociologists who do not publish within five years after receipt of the Ph.D. seldom publish after that point, additional computations were made for those who had held the

degree for at least five years. These data are found in Tables III and IV.

The data in Table III (page 6) present the same picture of productive concentration found in Table I. For example, those who wrote three or more articles (22% of the producers) published 49% of the total number of articles. Again, over half (57%) produced only one article. Similarly, Table IV (page 7) exhibits the same relationship found in Table II. Thus, those who wrote three or more publications (28%) produced 55% of the publications. Once again, nearly half produced only one publication.

The literature cited earlier suggests that a large percentage of sociologists are unproductive. The data presented in this study suggests that of those who do publish, the majority are relatively unproductive. Conversely, the highly productive minority of individuals pen the majority of publications. Thus, the picture which appears to emerge is that of a highly uneven distribution of productivity among Ph.D. sociologists in the United States.

TABLE I

Article Productivity of 96 Sociologists

Number of Articles Category	Number of Sociologists	Percentage of Sociologists	Number of Articles Published	Percentage of Total Articles
1	52	54	52	27
2	19	20	38	19
3	10	10	30	15
4	6	6	24	12
5	5	5	25	13
6	2	2	12	6
7	1	1	7	4
8	1	1	8	4
Total	96	99 [a]	196	100

[a]Total does not equal 100% due to rounding.

TABLE II

Total Publication Productivity of 124 Sociologists

Number of Publications Category	Number of Sociologists	Percentage of Sociologists	Number of Publications Produced	Percentage of Total Publications
1	57	46	57	21
2	25	20	50	18
3	23	19	69	25
4	7	6	28	10
5	5	4	25	9
6	3	?	18	7
7	3	2	21	8
8	1	1	8	3
Total	124	100	276	101 [a]

[a] Total does not equal 100% due to rounding.

TABLE III

Article Productivity of 65 Sociologists Who Received the Ph.D. Before 1969

Number of Articles Category	Number of Sociologists	Percentage of Sociologists	Number of Articles Published	Percentage of Total Articles
1	37	57	37	29
2	14	22	28	22
3	4	6	12	10
4	5	8	20	16
5	2	3	10	8
6	2	3	12	10
7	1	2	7	5
8	0	0	0	0
Total	65	101 [a]	126	100

[a]Total does not equal 100% due to rounding.

TABLE IV

Total Publication Productivity of 87 Sociologists
Who Received the Ph.D. Before 1969

Number of Publications Category	Number of Sociologists	Percentage of Sociologists	Number of Publications Produced	Percentage of Total Publications
1	41	47	41	22
2	21	24	42	23
3	13	15	39	21
4	6	7	24	13
5	1	1	5	3
6	2	2	12	6
7	2	2	14	8
8	1	1	8	4
Total	87	99 [a]	185	100

[a]Total does not equal 100% due to rounding.

Footnotes

[1]L. J. Smith, "Research Workers in Selected School Subjects," Journal of Educational Research, Vol. 45, 1951, pp. 255-273.

[2]J. Cole & S. Cole, "Measuring the Quality of Sociological Research: Problems in the Use of the Science Citation Index," American Sociologist, Vol. 6, 1971, pp. 23-29.

[3]P. F. Lazarsfeld & W. Thielens, Jr., The Academic Mind, Glencoe: Free Press, 1958.

[4]L. S. Lewis, "Publish or Perish: Some Comments on a Hyperbole," Journal of Higher Education, Vol. 38, 1967, pp. 85-89.

[5]E. F. Gardner, Tomorrow's Graduate School of Education, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1958.

[6]N. Babchuk & A. P. Bates, "Professor or Producer: The Two Faces of Academic Man," Social Forces, Vol. 40, 1962, pp. 341-344.

[7]J. J. Wanderer, "Academic Origins of Contributors to the American Sociological Review, 1955-65," American Sociologist, Vol. 1, 1966, pp. 241-243.

[8]N. D. Glenn & W. Villemez, "The Productivity of Sociologists at 45 American Universities," American Sociologist, Vol. 5, 1970, pp. 244-252.

[9]E. T. Lightfield, "Output and Recognition of Sociologists," American Sociologist, Vol. 6, 1971, pp. 128-133.

[10]R. F. Larson, M. L. Petrowsky & J. S. Vandiver, "Journal Productivity of Ph.D. Sociologists," American Sociologist, Vol. 7, 1972, pp. 9-11.

[11]Y. C. Yoels, "The Fate of the Ph.D. Dissertation in Sociology: An Empirical Examination," American Sociologist, Vol. 8, 1973, pp. 87-89.

[12]D. J. Hanson, "The Dissemination of Ph.D. Results: Further Findings," American Sociologist, Vol. 10, 1975, pp. 237-238.

[13]E. T. Lightfield, op. cit.